



THE  
CONNOISSEUR.

By Mr. T O W N,

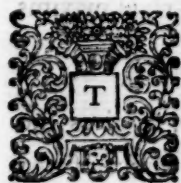
CRITIC and CENSOR-GENERAL.

NUMBER LXXIV.

THURSDAY, June 26, 1755.

— — — *Non ita Romuli  
Præscriptum, et intonsæ Catonis  
Auspiciis, veterumque norma.*

HOR.



HERE is no method of reproof more in vogue, than the drawing invidious parallels between the present times and the past. The grumbling politician rails over his coffee at the present ministry, and reminds you with a sigh of the golden Days of Queen *Bess*: while, in matters of less consequence, the critic shakes his head at Mr. TOWN, and mentions BICKERSTAFF. But the moralists are above all others devoted to this practice. These wise gentlemen are continually looking backwards, and condemning what lays immediately before them by retrospect. They are for ever harping on this jarring chord, and have

VOL. II.

G

scarce

scarce more words in their mouths than the solemn sentences said to be delivered by Fryar Bacon's Brazen Head, *Time is—Time was—Time is past.*

No comparisons of this sort are so frequently repeated, and so much insisted on, as those drawn between the Ancients and Moderns. If an eloquent member of the House of Commons is cruelly suspected of bellowing for a place, nothing rings in his ears but *Tully* and *Demosthenes*. If a gentleman or perhaps a nobleman, with a heavy mortgage on his estate, disencumbers it by selling his interest at a county election, he is immediately upbraided with one *Roman* that was not ashamed to follow the plough-tail, and another who could refuse large bribes, and content himself with a cottage and turnips. If a lady makes an unfortunate slip, she is told again and again of *Lucretia*, and fifty other school-boy tales of honour and chastity. In a word, there is not one fashionable frailty but has some stubborn antiquated virtue set in opposition to it; and our unhappy metropolis is every day threatened with destruction for its degeneracy from the rigid maxims of *Rome* or *Sparta*.

IN the midst of all these severe reflections, it gives me infinite pleasure, that I can with justice take notice of the incontestable superiority of the Moderns in point of Modesty. The arrogance of the Ancients was so remarkable, that, in their idea of a perfect character, they included every public and private virtue. They aimed at a strict observance of all the duties of life: and if some old *Romans* had been stiled Gods while living, it would not have been such gross flattery as was afterwards practised, in honouring the Emperors with an *Apotheosis*. Their inflexible honesty was their perpetual boast

boast, and their virtue was their pride. This high idea of a Perfect Character among the Ancients naturally urged them to lift themselves to an invidious superiority above the rest of the world: while the modest Moderns, by taking all the vices instead of the virtues into their notion of a Fine Gentleman, endeavour to let themselves down to a level with the lowest of their species, and have laid the surest foundation for humility. Fine Gentlemen are so far from being proud, that they are never guilty of any thing which gives them the least reason to be so: and our Fine Ladies have none of the disgusting haughtiness of virtue, though indeed they are seldom known to be ashamed.

It is impossible to devise one method of lowering the good opinion a man might possibly conceive of himself, that has not been put in practice. No Fine Gentleman ever aimed at acquiring any excellence, and if any natural perfections might give some little occasion for pride, the greatest pains have been taken to destroy them. Good parts have been often drowned in drunkenness, and a strong constitution sweated away in bagnios: and in the mean time learning has been totally neglected, lest improvement should bring on pedantry and literary pride. The most shining parts in the character of a Fine Gentleman are, that he drinks deep, dresses genteelly, rides well, can shoe his own horse, and is possessed of some few other qualifications, which nobody can ever suspect a mind the least given to ambition would ever labour to acquire. For my part I am so far from agreeing with our famous satirist that love of fame is the universal passion, that when I observe the behaviour of our Fine Gentlemen, I am apt to think it proceeds from the lowest and humblest turn of mind: indeed their singular modesty appears to me the only

only means of accounting for their actions, which commonly tend to place them in the meanest and most contemptible light.

NOTHING but this invincible Modesty, and fear of seeming to aim at excellence, could ever give rise to certain habits, not only ridiculous, but ungraceful. Good eyes, for instance, are universally acknowledged to give lustre to the whole countenance, yet fashion and humility have blinded the whole town. The beau draws his eyes out of his pocket, and the beauties kill us through spying-glasses. It has been known to be the vogue for persons of fashion to lose the use of their legs, and limp along as if they were crippled: this practice I daily expect to be revived, for I take it for granted that the tall staves now carried about must naturally dwindle into crutches. An inarticulate lisp even now infects the delivery in polite conversation. It is not at all unfashionable to pretend deafness; and unless the ladies object to it, I do not despair of seeing the time when the whole modish world shall affect to be dumb.

THIS humble way of thinking has been carried so far, that it has even introduced a new species of hypocrisy. Fine Gentlemen, fearing lest their good qualities should in their own despite overbalance their bad ones, claim several vices to which they have no title. There is something very admirable and ingenuous in this disposition among our young people, who not only candidly discover all their frailties, but accuse themselves of faults, which they never intended to commit. I know a young fellow who is almost every morning complaining of the head-ache, and cursing the last night's champagne at the *St. Alban's*, when I am well assured he passed his evening very

very soberly with his maiden aunts in *Cheapside*. I am also acquainted with another gentleman, who is very fond of confessing his intrigues, and often modestly takes shame to himself for the great mischief he does among the women; though I well know he is too bashful even to make love to his laundresses. He sometimes laments publicly the unlucky consequences of an amour, and has more than once been discovered to send pill-boxes and gallipots directed for himself, to be left at the bar of neighbouring coffee-houses. The same humble turn of mind induces the frugal to appear extravagant: and makes many a religious young fellow deny his principles; brave his conscience, and affect the character and conversation of an Atheist. To say the truth, the generality of the gay world are arrant hypocrites in their vices, and appear to be worse than they really are. Many of our pretended Bloods are, in fact, no more drunkards, whoremasters, or infidels, than a bully is a man of courage: and are as sincere in their boasts of vice, as statesmen or beauties in their mutual professions of friendship.

THAT part of the female world, which composes the order of Fine Ladies, have as much humility as their counterparts, the Fine Gentlemen. There is something so charming in the fair sex that we should almost adore them, if they did not lay aside all the pride of reputation, and by some good-natured familiarities reduce themselves to an equality with us. It is indeed wonderful to see with what diligence our polite ladies pare off the excellencies from their characters. When we see them almost as naked as the *Graces*, it is natural to suppose them as warmly devoted to *Venus*; and when we hear them talk loosely, and encourage double meanings in conversation, we are apt to imagine their notions of honour not very strict



or severe. But after all this is frequently mere hypocrisy, and the effect of humility. Many a lady very wanton in appearance, is in reality very modest; and many a coquet has lost her reputation, without losing her virtue. I make no doubt but that several ladies of suspicious characters are not so bad as they seem, and that there are honourable persons among the gayest of our women of quality.

To return whence I see set out, the extraordinary Modesty of the Moderns, so averse to the arrogant pride of the Ancients claiming all virtues and good qualities whatsoever, is the only key to their behaviour. Thus vice, or at least the appearance of vice, becomes absolutely requisite to pass through the world with tolerable decency, and the character of a man of spirit. As Sir *John Brute* says, "they were sneaking dogs, "and afraid of being damned in those days," but we are better informed, and fear nothing but the appearance of too much virtue. To secure the nobility, gentry, and others from so shocking an imputation, I shall speedily present the world with a curious piece, compiled from the practice and principles of the present times, entitled *A New Treatise on Ethicks; or, a System of Immoral Philosophy*. In this treatise I have treated at large of Modern Modesty, shewn the excellence and utility of Immorality, and considered Drinking, Whoring, Fighting, and Gaming, as the four Cardinal Vices, or in other words, the principal constituents of Bucks, Bloods and Fine Gentlemen.

O